

2005 White House
Conference on Aging

Post-Event Summary Report

Name of Event: Nassau County White House Conference Independent Aging Event

Date of Event: June 15, 2005

Location of Event: Hofstra University, Hempstead, New York
(Include city and state)

Number of Persons attending: 300

Sponsoring Organization(s): Nassau County Department of Senior Citizen Affairs (DSCA)

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Please follow this format for each priority area, with the most important listed first. **Please ensure that your organization's name and contact information is provided at the bottom of each page submitted.**

Priority issue #1: (describe specific issue)

Impact on Driving and Motor Vehicle Operation by drivers over the age of 60. Drivers over the age of 60 number more than 25 million. While age does not necessarily predict the performance of the driver, reports do indicate that driving skills generally start to decline as early as 60 years of age. Attention to safety and good judgment are the hallmarks of a good driver, and these same attributes can ensure that getting behind the wheel can continue to be a safe activity for as long as possible for our nation's seniors.

Barriers: ((list any barriers that may exist related to this issue)

The aging process itself can begin to erode reflexes, eyesight, hearing and reaction time. Further impact of disease processes, including macular degeneration, orthopedic conditions, diabetes, cardiac conditions, arthritis, stroke, etc. cause greater challenges to perform what has become a routine activity of life; driving. Medications that treat the above ailments should also be considered when assessing the overall picture of today's driver over 60.

Cognitive and perceptual skills are key components to safe driving. Impairment in areas of visual attention, visual memory and mirror imaging are common deficits that interfere with judgment, safety and response times during routine traffic situations. Near misses of cars or pedestrians, running stop signs without realizing, or mixing gas and brake pedals are just a few warning signs of decreasing cognitive function. Spouses and children of the older driver are often the front line of defense as to unsafe practices on the road. The impact of this knowledge can be troublesome for the "whistle blower" as well as the driver. Driving for some is synonymous with independence and can cause great controversy when family members broach this topic.

Proposed Solution(s): (list suggested solutions to the challenges described above)

Interventions and solutions that can be applied to increase safety, allow drivers to continue on the road, and decrease confrontation and anxiety among family members follow:

- Evaluate and identify physical limits factors of driving (effects of arthritis, sensory loss, loss of extremities).
- Evaluate and identify cognitive and perceptual limiting factors of driving (effects of stroke, dementia and or organic factors).
- Identify and provide adaptive equipment to the car/van to improve overall function while driving.
- Identify and teach appropriate compensatory strategies, as indicated by the physical, cognitive and perceptual components of the evaluation.

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Submitted by Mary Murphy, OTR/L,
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